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HIPPIAS PAIDAGOGOS

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Historical parallels are dangerous playthings for less genial and ingenious writers than Plutarch. But President Hall will hardly repudiate, for he seems to invite, the one which lends a title to this discussion of his latest book. "To be a universal adept like Hippias suggests Diderot and the encyclopedists in the intellectual realm," he says (p. 58). And in the chapter on industrial education he complacently informs us that "as a student in Germany I took a few lessons each of a book-binder, a glass-blower, a shoemaker, a plumber, and a blacksmith . . . and I am proud that I can still mow and keep my scythe sharp; chop, plow, milk, churn, make cheese and soap, braid a palm-leaf hat complete, knit, spin, and even "put in a piece" in an old-fashioned hand loom, and weave frocking."

Similarly, it will be remembered, Hippias boasted that besides being an expert in literature, science, and education he had appeared at Olympia wearing only articles made by his own hands, his ring and seal, his strigil and oil flask, his shoes, cloak, tunic, and girdle of costly Persian fabric.

Nor does the analogy end here. Hippias had made vast collections of facts in ethnology and folk-lore which he easily memorized and recited to such audiences as preferred them to his more technical lectures on cosmology and the psychology of rhythm. He was the author of a popular and edifying work

on adolescence in which he set forth "what pursuits and practices are right and honorable for youth." He was an ardent advocate of nature and natural methods as opposed to the arbitrary conventions that stunt the free expansion of the soul. If Latin grammar had then been invented he would have welcomed with enthusiasm the emancipating proclamation "that no grammar and least of all that derived from the prim meager Latin . . . is adequate to legislate for the free spirit of our magnificent tongue." He was master of a highly-wrought rhetorical style adorned with bold imagery, technical and scientific allusion, and cumulation of synonyms. Conscious of these merits he was extremely impatient of those petty and quibbling critics who "morselize instead of presenting wholes." He, too, held that "over-accuracy is atrophy." He, too, thought that it was "low tackle" in Socrates to hold up the flights of exuberant youth "by forever being on the hunt for errors." He, too, would "rather be convicted of many errors by such methods than use them." And if, in the course of these observations, I exhibit anything of the carping captiousness of the philological and dialectical mind, the modern Hippias will doubtless thank me for supplying him in advance in fair though free paraphrase with the retort of his ancient prototype in like case: "Now what is all this, my friend, but splinterings and cheeseparings of controversy? The trouble with you and your disciples is that you don't look at things as wholes. But you separate off and isolate and thresh out and cavil upon and mince up and fly-blow some picayunish point of definition or relevancy; and so you miss the large and liberal phylogenetic view of the school-boy and the continuity of nature and the solidarity of existence which we take in the Paedagogical Seminary."

In spite of President Hall's breezy panegyric of slang and his denunciation of "linguistic manicuring," I must begin by saying that his style is deplorable. Its energy and vivacity are incommunicable gifts of temperament. Its vice is precisely that to which clever American youth is already too prone—a straining for emphasis, picturesqueness, and point at any cost of impropriety of phrase, grotesque metaphor, false antithesis, or

abuse of irrelevant scientific technicalities. Of what avail is it for the tutor in English to rise up early and take rest late in the endeavor to purge sophomoric rhetoric and eradicate the freshman's natural taste for bathos if the president of the university lets himself go in this fashion? (p. 44): "If not a polyphrastic philosophy seeking to dignify the occupation of the workshop by a pretentious Volapük of reasons and abstract theories, we have here the pregnant suggestion of a psychological quarry of motives and spirit opened and ready to be worked." Imagine President Eliot proposing "a true scale of standardized culture values for efferent processes." Or conceive of an eminent French writer saying that "crime is cryptogamous," or talking about rudimentary *organs* of the soul *cropping* out in menacing forms or being developed so that we should be *immune* to them on the principle of the Aristotelian *κάθαρσις*.

These and similar perversities are not the occasional lapses of the austere specialist careless of verbal niceties, but the systematic affectations of the ambitious rhetorician striving to dazzle. To the same source we may refer the wanton inaccuracies in quotation, etymology, literary allusions, and *obiter dicta*, singly trifling but collectively indicative of a temper the reverse of scientific. It is not necessary to quote Latin or allude to Greek. But if you do you must not talk of "agolasts," or write *valare est philosophari* or *vivere est cogitari*. Nobody is obliged to etymologize; and President Hall, indeed, when assailing the elementary study of Latin deprecates a "consciousness of etymologies which rather impedes than helps the free movement of the mind." But he surely abuses his freedom when he tells us that "heteronomous" means "having a different name," and proclaims that "the good teacher is now a pedotrieb or boy driver," apparently deriving Παιδοτριβης from Greek Παις and German *treiben*. By parity of etymologizing a paedagog would be one who sets the boys agog. It is better to omit quotation and anecdote altogether than to tell your readers that Pindar said "*only* he is great who is great with his hands and feet," or that Plato *reproached* Aristotle with being a reader, or that the old Roman pronunciation of Latin is un-

known and unrecognized in the schools of the European continent, or that "at a brilliant examination a candidate for the doctor's degree who had answered many questions concerning the forms of Lucretius, when asked whether he was a dramatist, historian, poet, or philosopher, did not know and his professor deemed the question improper." This last anecdote has been widely repeated by reviewers and will doubtless long survive in paedagogical literature. It will serve as well as another for an issue. It is on its face absolutely impossible. President Hall was either the victim of an absurd hoax; or he is permitting himself a license of affirmation which justifies us in a certain reserve when he assures us elsewhere, on the authority of statistics which we cannot control, that dolichocephalous students do not elect Greek.

These trifles are merely symptomatic of the main defect of the book, that its temper and method are rhetorical, not scientific. The evolution of the thought proceeds not by consecutive, relevant reasoning but by the old rhetorical method of the amplification of "topics," commonplaces, and favorite ideas. This merely rhetorical amplification alternates, it is true, with amplification by statistics and anecdotage. But the essential procedure is the same. Ideas are developed, illustrated, emphasized in casual juxtaposition or false antithesis. They are not linked in a coherent sequence of exposition or argument. Except in the last two chapters, of which more later, we search the book in vain for any unity of purpose or consistent educational ideal. It is merely an "imperfect conflation of psychological view-points," to characterize Hippias in his own peculiar style.

I do not mean that there are no good ideas in the book. So alert and receptive a mind as President Hall's inevitably assimilates ideas even from opponents. I cordially concur with the statement that as regards the mastery of certain indispensable elements in youth "pedagogic art consists in breaking the child into them betimes as intensely and as quickly as possible with minimal strain and with the least amount of explanation or coquetting for natural interest." And I can almost fancy that I

am reperusing a forgotten paper of my own¹ when I read on pp. 249, 250 that "in modern pedagogy there is an increased tyranny of things, a growing neglect or exclusion of all that is unseen;" that in consequence "the psychic operations of our school youth today are "of the elementary and half-animal kind that consists in imagery;" and that "it is as if what are sometimes called the associative fibers, both ends of which are in the brain, were dwarfed in comparison with the afferent and efferent fibres that mediate sense and motion." But I am quite unable to correlate these isolated *aperçus* with the exaggerated stress laid on manual and muscle training, with the attack on Latin grammar, with the deprecation of all analysis implied in the anecdote "I can do and understand this perfectly if you only wont explain it," or with the statistics of school girls' favorite names to which he turns "in this deplorable condition" to find that "the child once set in the midst again corrects the wise men." Is it by encouraging or suppressing their statistically demonstrated preference for "Helen" and "Bessie" that young ladies are to be given "resources in solitude" and taught "to think abstractly without the visual provocation"?

It is not ideas that we lack today, but criticism, sanity, and a sense of proportion to harmonize and reduce them to order. Mere ideas are as plentiful as blackberries and as infectious as germs. President Hall's system is saturated with them. He is an eminently "suggestive" writer. He suggests, for example, that football "supplies topics for terse, vigorous, and idiomatic theme writing," and "lays instructors under the necessity of being more interesting, that their work be not jejune or dull by contrast." "I think of as many matters as he; but I give heaven thanks and make no boast of them," the dazed reader cries after his break-neck, zigzag course across the fields of evo-

¹ "Discipline *vs.* Dissipation in Secondary Education," *The School Review*, April, 1897, p. 217 ff.; e.g., p. 227: "But while we are educating the central nervous system in the reception and retention of sense images, let us see to it that we do not let slip the few short years in which it is possible to establish lines of relation between sense images, and gradually elaborate the raw material of thought into the higher, more economic, and more effective form of ideas."

lutionary psychology, physiology of the muscles, manual training, sloyd, the history of gymnastics, plays, sports, and games, and anecdotal biographies of Napoleon, Agassiz, Chatterton, Marie Bashkirtseff, and Mary MacLane, with digressions on Aristotle's *κἀθαρισ*, Rembrandt als Erzieher, choreic tics, the English pronunciation of Latin, Hughling Jackson's three-level theory, the accessory muscular system, verbigerations, automatisms, onychophagia, athletic records, dolls, dancing, Bushido, anti-aphrodisiac cold baths, the psychology of telegraphy, the quest of maximum metabolism in truancy, New York gangs, school girls' ideals, German duels, and the number of words in the English language. But if he asks for the concernancy and relevancy of it all he is answered only by the sledge-hammer strokes of rhetoric with which each idea is emphasized as it happens to present itself. The author's personal enthusiasm for the topics of the successive chapters as representative of his own past ethnological and psychological studies is the only unifying educational principle in the book. There is undoubtedly an intense conviction that education is somehow to be reformed by motor training, child study, *questionnaires*, and the far-fetched analogies of biological evolution. We are promised mountains and marvels for the future, but at present the mountain is delivered only of truism or paradox.

We are all aware of the advantages of farm life in youth and the harmful effects of bad air and confinement in the city school-room. It is not ignorance but want of will, money, and energy that leaves the heating and ventilation even of university classrooms so defective. It is not necessary to tabulate 700 sports of 2,000 children in order to reach the sapient conclusion (p. 85), "parents and society must therefore provide the most favorable conditions for the kind of amusement fitting at each age." Lindley's study of 897 motor automatisms in children divided into 82 classes supplies no firmer basis for practical paedagogy than Plato's observation that the young are naturally incapable of keeping still and that we should therefore direct their movements into healthful, rhythmic, and gracious forms. Mothers and teachers will not deal more tact-

fully with bad habits for learning to call them "motor combinations that will need laborious decomposition." If "Colegrove concludes from his data that the period of adolescence is one of great psychical awakening" he concludes nothing that everybody who has ever observed a growing boy or girl has not already concluded.

It arrests the attention to be told (p. 275) that "after twenty . . . the male acquires more and the female less visual and auditory memories." But everybody knows that though it may be true of a Turk and his harem it is not true of an American college professor and his wife. Some readers will find profundity in the statement (p. 237) that "both mental and moral acquisition sink at once too deep to be reproduced by examination without injury both to intellect and will. But it remains true that if there has been too much competitive examination in England the flabbiness of American scholarship is largely due to the fact that owing to our naïve acceptance of such *dicta* as this we have now too little. The statistically established statement (p. 211) that "what seems to be most appreciated in teachers is the giving of purpose, arousing of ideals, kindling of ambition"—in short, "inspiration," could be foretold by anyone who reflects that this is both the conventional and the only interesting thing to say, and that it would be intolerably prosaic to approve a teacher because he knew his subject and helped the student to know it.

Nothing emerges from the long chapter of biographical anecdote and the modest admission of eminent men that they owed nothing to their teachers, unless it be the inference that it is better to be a poor student than a good one. This will always be a popular view, and, life being very complicated, it is sometimes true; but we can hardly be expected to preach it in the classroom.

As for the pseudo-scientific jargon and the lessons of evolution neither courtesy nor common-sense requires us to take them seriously. President Eliot, I believe, once said that our problems are our own, and that we have nothing to learn from the educational experience of the Renaissance. I am not sure

that this is quite so. But however respectfully we may treat him in the teachers' conference or the paedagogical seminary we are all perfectly well aware that our still more remote ancestor, "the tidal ascidian," has nothing to do with the matter in hand. "Phylogenetic motivation" is no improvement on Plato's *κατὰ φύσιν*. The profound scientific observation that "by right mastication we are thus developing speech organs" may be allowed to pair off with the no less significant discovery of Professor Lewis Carroll that the process is reversible:

I took to the law
And argued each case with my wife,
And the muscular strength that it gave to my jaw
Has lasted the rest of my life.

The phylo-onto-genetic argument that education ought to recapitulate the life of the race can be made to prove anything. It will supply a plausible reason for compulsory Greek, thus: the small boy will recapitulate the age of stone-throwing and cave-dwelling without external aid; but in order that the adolescent may recapitulate the Renaissance he should be compelled to study Greek. In short, these pretentious applications of biological and evolutionary analogies to the practical educational and social problems of modern man are precisely on a level with the reversed evolution of Plato's *Timaeus* which tells us that the Demiurgus endowed man with rudimentary nails or claws in prescience of the day when he would degenerate into woman and other animals and need them. The only difference is that Plato knew that he was joking, and our modern doctors do not know either that he was or that they are.

These strictures, as already hinted, do not apply to the two concluding chapters on "The Education of Girls" and on "Moral and Religious Training." Here President Hall is not trying to extract educational cucumbers from the moonshine of the paedagogical seminary, but is arguing out of an earnest conviction vigorously, consecutively, and lucidly to definite conclusions; and, whether we accept or reject his final opinion on these high and delicate matters, no fair-minded critic can fail to recognize the sanity, breadth, and temperateness of his

discussion of them. *O si sic omnia*. The quality of these chapters both in content and (in the main) in style raises the doubt whether I ought not to cancel what I have said of the remainder of the book. But I think not. In the prevailing timidity and complaisance of American criticism the writer who has in any way achieved distinction is undefended against his worser inspirations by any check save his own scientific and literary conscience. Vivacity, picturesqueness, "suggestiveness," energy, the public appreciates. But there is nobody to apply the ferule to the knuckles of a college president if in straining after these qualities he permits himself aberrations of taste and logic which the educated opinion of older civilizations would not tolerate, and which almost justify Kipling's sneer at "the picture-writing of a half-civilized people."